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THE TRANSFORMERS



CHAOS
BEGINS HERE!



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CHAOS
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THE TRANSFORMERS



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THE TRANSFORMERS

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STORY SO FAR:

Rodimus left Earth in search of the Matrix of Leadership, consulted a Deception base and faced the newly repaired Megatron, who incapacitated him and scattered the Matrix shards across space...

...Until he crash-landed on a mysterious planet alive. The Matrix lodged into his chest, he escaped the grasp of desperate aliens and found Wheelie. They both headed towards Cybertron, where they reunited with Ironhide and Sunstreaker. The reunion was cut short when a surprise attack led Rodimus to a disturbing revelation: Galvatron was back on Cybertron and he had amassed a huge army. The Autobots escaped further attack by bailing off and heading back to Earth, intending to warn the other Autobots of the new situation on Cybertron...

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HA, THANKS.
I LOSE MY
WHEELS AND
YOU GET SOME
OF YOUR
CWN!

I KNOW,
RIGHT? RACE
YOU AROUND
THE INNER-
RING.



BUMBLEBEE!



YOU, YOU
GOTTA GET
OUT HERE.



IT'S
HOT ROD.
HE'S BACK
FROM THE
DEAD!

BACK
FROM THE
DEAD? THAT'S
RIDICULOUS. WHY
WOULD YOU
THINK HE'S—

Excerpt from file 01090101 Vector Sigma archive. It was said upon that day that arsonists for crime. Hot Rod, shining like a Prime of older days, and gloom went before him. And glistening at his chest shone the Matrix fair almost beyond endurance with power unimaginable. With him also were Sunstreaker, who had been named " betrayer," and Ironhide, who had fallen, and Wreck, lost almost to the edge of memory.



And Autobots who had once battled across innumerable stars, and who had beheld events on galactic scales fell silent in wonder, for the confusion upon them was great, but even greater was their awe, and the kindling of hope in a place where hope had guttered.





Even Optimus Prime himself could not contend for leadership with one who held the Matrix, nor would he wish to. For Optimus was ensnared in the same ancient doom as the Primes before him, and it was both the source and the penitent cost of his wisdom to abide rules wrought by fathomless hands greater than his.



But Hot Rod brushed himself before Optimus, and made obeisance, and laid on claim on the Matrix, but was only ever acting as a steward. Thus were his rough words to Bumblebee revealed not as pride, but as a desire to see his task, so near the end, finally completed.



Hot Rod spoke long and without pause, telling of how he'd come to each of his lost friends, and the peril that he'd faced that even now still threatened their home, and Prime listened.

Through a journey almost impossible, and from the very vale of death, had Hot Rod returned, and the change in him was plain.



And then Optimus pronounced his name "Rodman," and ever was it so, and his former name was never heard again, for this was the name of a smaller figure, short of patience and unmoved by counsel. And it was a great honor whose majesty settled on Rodman's shoulders neatly as handsomely as the Matrix itself, though this was more deserved, and he wore it more proudly.

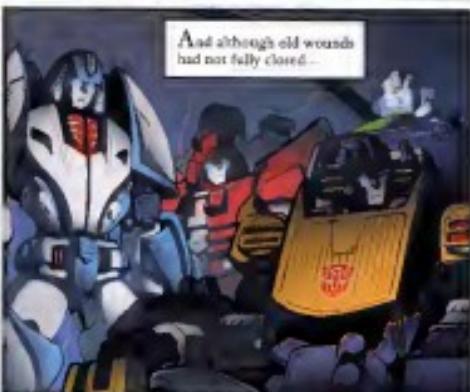
And the Autobots were struck with wonder and delight with the return of so many they'd thought lost.



And strangers newly met



And although old wounds had not fully closed...



...the urge to forgive overcame all suspicion and in that brief hour at least, all were one.



And then Optimus Prime approached And he spoke



ROBOMUS HAS COME FROM CYBERTRON. HE HAS FOUND THE PLANET IS HABITABLE AGAIN. THE ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN PROCESSED, AND THE SWARM ELIMINATED, AND HE HAS ALSO FOUND THAT GALVATRON IS THERE, AND SALVATION IS RAISING AN ARMY.

FOR WHAT PURPOSE, WE DON'T KNOW, BUT HE'S BEEN ASSEMBLING IT FOR THE PAST FEW MONTHS, SLOWLY CAPTURING MORE OF THE PLANET. HE HAS OVERRUN NEARLY ALL OF IT NOW.

I REFUSE TO HAVE OUR HOME RESTORED ONLY TO BE HOST TO A LUNATIC AND HIS ARMY. I AM GOING TO STOP HIM.

THIS LAST ISSUE AND TRANSFORMERS: HEART OF DARKNESS #4 FOR RETAILERS - MARCH

ANY AUTOBOT WHO WISHES TO JOIN ME IS WELCOME.

HOW... HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

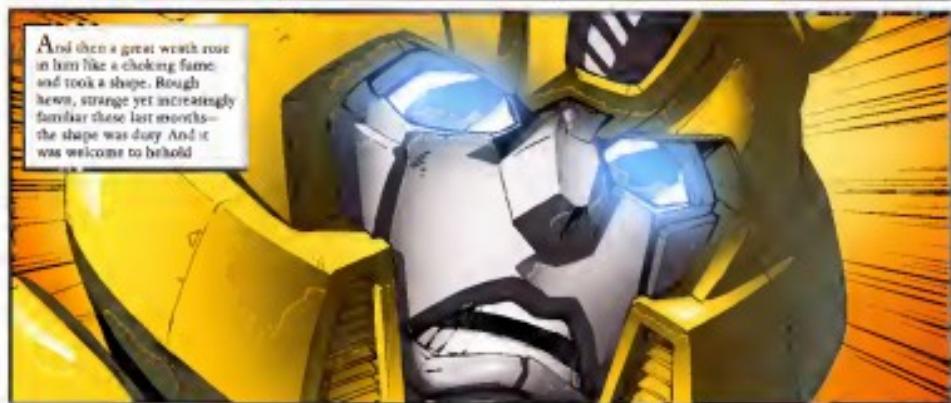
WE'LL TAKE WHAT EVERONIN WE CAN RATION FROM SKYWATCH'S COFFERS, AND WE'LL USE THIS REMAINING CHARGE IN ROBOMUS' BATTERY. CRUSADE SUPREME HAS AGREED TO SEPARATE HIMSELF TO CARRY US THERE, AND HAVE HIS BASE REMAIN HERE.

ON EARTH

WITH BOTH THE MATRIX AND MEGATRON IN OUR CUSTODY, WE'VE NEVER BEEN A MORE APPEALING TARGET FOR DECEPTICON ATTACK. GETTING BOTH OF THEM OFF-WORLD WOULD BE THE WISEST CHOICE, REGARDLESS.











And, glittering like a jewel in the wintering sun and among the dying stars, the larger host of Autolope finally left Earth. Now refugees from two worlds, the longing for home was strong in their hearts. And though they came later to great disaster, and even greater disengagement and wandering, now there was only joy. The great joy of adventure and homecoming and brotherhood.

And many would never return to these strange green and teeming shores again.

SPACE OPERA—FINAL TABLEAUX: ORPHANS OF THE HELIX

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE!



POLICE ACTION: PROLOGUE





HE SPILLS. IT'S NOTHING NEW, BUT IT'S GOOD TO HEAR IT AGAIN.

PRIME.

I'VE GOT WHAT I NEED.

SHAFT'S WHEN PRIME FILLED IN THE TEE. HE TOOK IT BETTER THAN I EXPECTED. SMART QUESTIONS, NO WHINING. FOCUSED THE ANGER.

HE'S GOING TO BE A GREAT LEADER. ONE DAY, IF HE GETS THE CHANCE.

LEADER'S A TOUGH JOB. I'D LAUGH IN THEIR FACE IF THEY OFFERED IT. LOTS OF EXPOSURE, LOTS OF PEOPLE ASKING QUESTIONS, LOTS OF COMPROMISES.

COMPROMISES ARE TROUBLING. EXPEDIENT, BUT IMPERFECT. COMPROMISES WILL RUIN US.

I DEAL, IN FACTS. I FOLLOW THEM WHERE THEY LEAD. I PERCEIVE THEIR EXISTENCE. I CALCULATE THEIR RAMIFICATIONS.

COMPROMISES ARE BORN OF FACTS. AN ALCHEMICAL SYNTHESIS THAT DOESN'T INTEREST ME. I DON'T MANUFACTURE REALITY. I WRECK FOR SIGNS OF ITS PASSING. AND I HUNT IT.







YOU ARE DEFINITELY INVOLVED.



CONTINUED IN
TRANSFORMERS #25

CHAOS HAS ARRIVED!

Starting with this issue, the TRANSFORMERS: CHAOS event kicks off. Now that might seem a little strange considering that this issue had two stories in it. The first story is continued next issue as guest writer, and CHAOS co-architect, James Roberts comes on board for two special issues that take us back to the early days of Cybertron—and the early days of Optimus Prime and Megatron's relationship. Heck, we're even going to touch on aspects set up way back in MEGATRON: ORIGIN, if you've been around that long.

That's issues #22 and #23. With issue #24, CHAOS part 1 begins the battle for Cybertron! CHAOS will run in the even-numbered issues of TRANSFORMERS, while starting with issue #25 and running in the odd-numbered issues is "The Last Story on Earth." That picks up from the second story in this issue.

Okay, that all seems confusing, doesn't it? But it's all part of CHAOS. There is a checklist in this very issue that should help you keep easy track.

And we're running CHAOS from this issue (#21) all the way to issue #125. Yes, you read that correctly, #125. What this really means is it runs from #21 through what would be #32. That's a lot of issues, but with so much going on, and so much excitement in this storyline, we're double-shipping TRANSFORMERS until the end of the year! That's two issues every month! Starting right now! So come back to your shop in two weeks to pick up the next issue!

I'll come back to #125 in a minute. First, I'd like to talk a little bit about what CHAOS is and how it came about. And its inception can be traced back pretty far. When I was tasked with editing the TRANSFORMERS line of comics, it was immediately clear that the core fanbase was fragmented. There were (and are) many continuity errors—or things flat-out ignored, and lack of character consistency. Some of this had legitimate merit. Other parts didn't. But it's all very tricky. I wanted to clean that up, but I also knew we had to drive the bus forward.

So the first order of business was to launch an ongoing series with its own premise, its own hook. We did that with Mike Costa and Don Figueiro at the helm. Mike had a roughly two-year plan. And CHAOS is the end of that initial plan. This is where Mike and Don's stories really bear their fruit.

The second order of business was getting some sort of sense of cohesion to the TRANSFORMERS comic book universe. And so we started the ongoing series focused on Earth. We let the characters in space sit, for the most part. We gave them time to move around and adjust. And it was during all of this time that Galvatron was out there, making moves, and no one on Earth was any the

wiser. What this allowed us to do is simple. It allowed us to pick up threads from the previous arc or the ongoing. We set off directly from the events of ALL HAIL MEGATRON and recently used the miniseries INFESTATION: TRANSFORMERS and now HEART OF DARKNESS to begin to cast our ropes further back in the timeline. We're picking up on Simon Furman's Dead Universe saga. And next issue, we touch on MEGATRON: ORIGIN territory.

We're hoping that the effect of all of this is a more unified universe. Not every continuity paradox will be addressed in the course of CHAOS; it's not built to do that, nor should it. What it does do is get all the characters on the same page, there's a big threat to fight. It wraps up a few loose ends and storylines. And it hopefully will give us a firm sense that all the TRANSFORMERS comics you've read over the last five years are full of merit. That all versions of eras, or whatever you want to call them, have contributed to what the current TRANSFORMERS comic is.

We couldn't be telling the CHAOS story without the work of writers Simon Furman, Eric Holmes, Nick Roche, Shane McCarthy, Zander Cannon, James Roberts, Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning, and Mike Costa. Whether you've loved every story or not, they are all necessary to what CHAOS is and how we got here.

CHAOS is big—it's epic—and it will have lasting effects on the TRANSFORMERS universe. But what I love most about it is that for the first time since I've been editing TRANSFORMERS, I feel like it's firing on all cylinders. The past TRANSFORMERS comics are providing firepower to make these issues take off even farther. In other words, this is what we've been driving towards since my first day as editor on these books—and it only gets better from here!

Now, back to #125... This will be our final issue of 2011. And it is something you cannot possibly predict. But it is a game-changer in and of itself. Right now, I can tell you this much: the creative team is ENCRYPTED. The story is ENCRYPTED. And it's #125 and not #32 because of ENCRYPTED. Okay, well, I guess I can't tell you that much as my computer brain keeps putting "ENCRYPTED" over everything I try to type. You'll just have to trust me—issue #125 is going to blow you away! But only AFTER you're already blown away by our biweekly awesome epic known as CHAOS!

Thanks for reading.

Andy Schmidt
Transformers Editor
May 2011

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DCP